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A

DEFENCE

OF THE

ROCKINGHAM PARTY,

IN THEIR LATE

COALITION

WITH

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
FREDERIC LORD NORTH.

LONDON:

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A

DEFENCE

OF THE

ROCKINGHAM PARTY,

&c. &c. &c.

THE preſent reign will certainly appear to our poſterity full of the nobleſt materials for hiſtory. Many circumſtances ſeem to have pointed it out as a very critical period. The general diffuſion of ſcience has, in ſome degree, enlightened the minds of all men; and has cleared ſuch, as have any influence upon the progreſs of manners and ſociety, from a thouſand unworthy pre-

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poſſeſſions. The diſſipation and luxury that reign uncontrouled have ſpread effiminacy and irreſolution every where.—The grand defection of the United States of America from the mother country, is one of the moſt intereſting events, that has engaged the attention of Europe for centuries. And the number of extraordinary geniuſes that have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the political world, gives a dignity to the ſcene. They pour a luſtre over the darkeſt parts of the ſtory, and beſtow a beauty upon the tragedy, that it could not otherwiſe have poſſeſſed.

At a time like this, when the attention of mankind has been kept alive by a ſeries of the moſt important events, we ceaſe to admire at things which would otherwiſe appear uncommon, and wonders almoſt loſe their name. Even now, however, when men were almoſt grown callous to novelty, and the youngeſt of us had, like Cato in the play, lived long enough to be "ſurpriſed at nothing," a matter has occurred which few expected,

and

and to which, for that reaſon, men of no great ſtrength of mind, of no nerve of political feeling, ſcarcely know how to reconcile themſelves. I refer to the coalition between the friends of the late marquis of Rockingham and the noble commoner in the blue ribbon.

The manner of blaming this action is palpable and eaſy. The cenſure is chiefly directed againſt that wonderful man, whom, at leaſt in their hearts, his countrymen, I believe, have agreed to regard as the perſon of brighteſt genius, and moſt extenſive capacity, that now adorns the Britiſh ſenate. Has not this perſon, we are aſked, for years attacked the noble lord in the moſt unqualified manner? Is there any aſperſion, any inſinuation, that he has not thrown out upon his character? Has he not repreſented him as the weakeſt man, and the worſt miniſter, to whom the direction of affairs was ever committed? Has he not imputed to his prerogative principles, and his palpable miſconduct, the whole catalogue of our

 misfortunes?

misfortunes? If such men as these are to unite for the detested purposes of ambition, what security can we have for any thing valuable, that yet remains to us? Is not this the very utmost reach of frontless profligacy? What dependence after this is to be placed in the man, who has thus given the lie to all his professions, and impudently flown in the face of that honest and unsuspecting virtue, which had hitherto given him credit for the rectitude of his intentions?

I do not mean for the present to enter into a direct answer to these several observations. I leave it to others, to rest the weight of their cause upon sounding exclamations and pompous interogatories. For myself, I am firmly persuaded, that the oftner the late conduct of the Rockingham connexion is summoned to the bar of fair reason, the more cooly it is considered, and the less the examiner is led away by the particular prejudices of this side or of that, the more commendable it will appear. We do not fear the light.

We

We do not ſhun the ſcrutiny. We are under no apprehenſions for the conſequences.

I will reſt my argument upon the regular proof of theſe three propoſitions.

Firſt—That the Rockingham connexion, was the only connexion by which the country could be well ſerved.

Secondly—That they were not by themſelves of ſufficient ſtrength to ſupport the weight of adminiſtration.

Thirdly—That they were not the men whoſe ſervices were the moſt likely to be called for by the ſovereign, in the preſent criſis.

Firſt—I am to prove, that the country could not be well ſerved but by the Rockingham connexion.

There are three points principally concerned in the conſtituting a good adminiſtration;

ſtration; liberal principles, reſpectable abilities, and incorruptible integrity.—Let us examine with a view to theſe, the other four parties in the Britiſh government. The connexion of the earl of Shelburne, that of lord North, the Bedford party, and the Scottiſh. In reviewing theſe, it is neceſſary that I ſhould employ a manly freedom, though, at the ſame time, I ſhould be much unwilling to do a partial injuſtice to any of them.

It is true, there is ſome difference between the language of the ſame men in office, and out of office. The Bedford connexion, however, have never been conceived to bear an over favourable aſpect to the cauſe of liberty. They are the avowed enemies of innovation and reform.

The Scottiſh party are pretty much confounded with the ſet of men that are called, by way of diſtinction, the king's friends.

friends. The deſign of theſe men has been to exalt regal power and prerogative upon the ruins of ariſtocracy, and the neck of the people. Arguments, and thoſe by no means of a frivolous deſcription, have been brought to prove, that a moſt ſubtle and deep-laid ſcheme was formed by them, in the beginning of the reign, to ſubſerve this odious purpoſe. It has been ſuppoſed to have been purſued with the moſt inflexible conſtancy, and, like a ſkiff, when it ſails along the meandering courſe of a river, finally to have turned to account the moſt untoward gales.

Lord North, whatever we may ſuppoſe to have been his intrinſic abilities, ſtands forward, as, perhaps, the moſt unfortunate miniſter, that this country ever produced. Misfortune overtook him in the aſſertion of the higheſt monarchical principles. In ſpite of misfortune, he adherred inflexibly to that aſſertion. In the moſt critical ſituations he remained in a ſtate of heſitation and uncertainty,

till

till the tide, that "taken at the flood, led up to fortune," was loſt. His verſatility, and the undiſguiſed attachment, that he manifeſted to emolument and power, were ſurely unworthy of the ſtake that was entruſted to him.

In what I have now ſaid, I do not much fear to be contradicted. It was not with a view to ſuch as are attached to any of theſe parties, that I have taken up the pen. Thoſe who come under this deſcription, are almoſt univerſally the advocates of monarchy, and think that they have nothing to regret, but that power and police are not eſtabliſhed upon a more uncontrolable footing among us. To ſuch perſons I do not addreſs myſelf. I know of nothing that the friends of lord Rockingham have to offer that can be of any weight with them; and, for my own part, I ſhould bluſh to ſay a word, that ſhould tend to conciliate their approbation to a ſyſtem, in which my heart was intereſted. The men I wiſh chiefly to have in view, are thoſe that

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are perſonally attached to the earl of Shelburne; ſuch as ſtand aloof from all parties, and are inclined to have but an indifferent opinion of any; and ſuch as have adhered to the connexion I have undertaken to defend, but whoſe approbation has been ſomewhat cooled by their late conduct. The two laſt in particular, I conſider as leaſt under the power of prejudice, and moſt free to the influence of rational conviction.

The friends of freedom have, I believe, in no inſtance heſitated, but between the Rockingham connexion, and the earl of Shelburne. It is theſe two then that it remains for me to examine. Lord Shelburne had the misfortune of coming very early upon the public ſtage. At that time he connected himſelf with the earl of Bute, and entered with warmth into the oppoſition to Mr. ſecretary Pitt. In this ſyſtem of conduct, however, he did not long perſiſt; he ſpeedily broke with the favourite, and ſoon after joined the celebrated hero, that had lately been the

object of his attack. By this perſon he was introduced to a conſiderable poſt in adminiſtration. In office, he is chiefly remembered by the very deciſive ſtile of authority and cenſure he employed, in a public letter, relative to the reſiſtance that was made to the act of 1767, for impoſing certain duties in America. From his reſignation with lord Chatham, he uniformly and ſtrenuouſly oppoſed the meaſures that were adopted for cruſhing that reſiſtance. He perſevered, with much apparent conſtancy, in one line of conduct for near ten years, and this is certainly the moſt plauſible period of his ſtory. He firſt called forth the ſuſpicions of generous and liberal men in every rank of ſociety, by his reſolute oppoſition to the American independency in 1778. But it was in the adminiſtration, that ſeemed to have been formed under ſo favourable auſpices in the ſpring of 1782, that he came moſt forward to general examination.

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The Rockingham connexion, in conformity to what were then ſuppoſed to be the wiſhes of the people, united, though not without ſome heſitation, with the noble earl and his adherents, in the conduct of public affairs. And how did he reward their confidence? He was careful to retain the queſtion reſpecting his real ſentiments upon the buſineſs of America, in as much obſcurity as ever. He wrote officially a letter to ſir Guy Carleton, which has never ſeen the light, by which that officer was induced to declare the American independency already irreverſibly recogniſed by the court of London; by which he appears to have deceived all his brother miniſters without exception; and by which Mr. Fox in particular, was induced to make the ſame declaration with general Carleton to foreign courts, and to come forward in the commons peremptorily to affirm, that there was not a ſecond opinion in the cabinet, upon this intereſting ſubject. How muſt a man of his undiſguiſed and manly character have felt, when, within

a week from this time, he found the noble earl declaring that nothing had ever been further from his thoughts, than an unconditional recognition; and ſucceſsfully exerting himſelf to bring over a majority in the cabinet to the oppoſite ſentiment? Lord Shelburne's obtaining, or accepting, call it which you will, of the office of firſt lord of the treaſury, upon the demiſe of lord Rockingham, without the privity of his fellow Miniſters, was contrary to every maxim of ingenuous conduct, and every principle upon which an aſſociation of parties can be ſupported. The declaration he made, and which was contradicted both by his own friends in the cabinet, and thoſe of Mr. Fox, that he knew of no reaſon *in God's earth* for that gentleman's reſignation, but that of his having ſucceeded to the office of premier, was ſurely ſufficiently ſingular.

But he is celebrated for being a man of large profeſſions, and by theſe profeſſions he has induced ſome perſons in different claſſes in ſociety, to eſteem him the

the friend of liberty and renovation. What he has held out, however, upon theſe heads, has not been entirely conſiſtent. He has appeared the enthuſiaſtical partizan of the ariſtocracy, a kind of government, which, carried to its height, is perhaps, of all the different ſpecies of deſpotiſm, the moſt intolerable. He has talked in a very particular ſtile of his fears of reducing the regal power to a ſhadow, of his deſire that the extenſion of prerogative ſhould keep pace with the confirmation of popular rights, and his reſolution, that, if it were in his power to prevent it, a king of England ſhould never be brought to a level with a king of Mahrattas. The true ſons of freedom will not certainly be very apprehenſive upon this ſcore, and will leave it to the numbers that will ever remain the adherents of monarchical power, to guard the barriers of the throne. In oppoſition, his declarations in favour of parliamentary reform ſeemed indeed very deciſive. In adminiſtration, he was particularly careful to explain away theſe decla-

declarations, and to assure the people that he would never employ any influence in support of the measure, but would only countenance it so far as it appeared to be the sense of parliament. In other words, that he would remain neutral, or at most only honour the subject with an eloquent harangue, and interest himself no further respecting it.

But let us proceed from his language to his conduct in office. Almost every salutary measure of administration, from the resignation of lord North downward, was brought about during the union of the noble earl with the Rockingham connexion. What inference are we to draw from this?—That administration, as auspicious as it was transitory, has never been charged with more than one error. They were thought too liberal in the distribution of two or three sinecures and pensions. To whom were they distributed? Uniformly, exclusively, to the friends of lord Shelburne. Lord Shelburne proposed them to his august colleague,

colleague, and the marquis, whoſe faults, if he had any, were an exceſs of mildneſs, and an unſuſpecting ſimplicity, perhaps too readily complied. But let it be remembered, that not one of his friends accepted, or to not one of his friends were theſe emoluments extended. But, if the noble marquis were ſparing in the diſtribution of penſions, the deficiency was abundantly ſupplied by his ſucceſſor. While the intereſts of the people were neglected and forgotten, the attention of the premier was in a conſiderable degree engroſſed by the petty arrangements of office. For one man a certain department of buſineſs was marked out; the place had been previouſly filled by another. Here the firſt perſon was at all events to be promoted; and the ſecond gratified with a penſion. Thus, in the minute detail of employment, in adjuſting the indeclinables of a court calendar, to detach a *commis* from this department, and to fix a clerk in that, burthen after burthen has been heaped upon the ſhoulders of a callous and lethargic people.—But no man

man can ſay, that the earl of Shelburne has been idle. Beſide all this, he has reſtored peace to his country. His merits in this buſineſs, have already been ſufficiently agitated. To examine them afreſh would lead me too far from the ſcope of my ſubject. I will not therefore now detain myſelf either to exculpate or criminate the miniſter, to whom, whatever they are, they are principally to be aſcribed.

From the conſiderations already ſuggeſted, I am afraid thus much may be fairly inferred, that the earl of Shelburne is a man, dark, inſidious and inexplicit in his deſigns; no decided friend of the privileges of the people; and in both reſpects a perſon very improper to conduct the affairs of this country. I would hope however, that the celebrated character given of him by the late lord Holland was ſomewhat too ſevere. "I "have met with many, who by perſe-"verance and labour have made them-

"ſelves

" ſelves Jeſuits ; it is peculiar to this man
" to have been born one."

Such then is the eſtimate we are compelled to form of a man who in his profeſſions has ſometimes gone as far, as the moſt zealous votaries of liberty. And what is the inference we ſhall draw from this ? Shall we, for the ſake of one man ſo ſpecious and plauſible, learn to think the language of all men equally empty and deceitful ? Having once been betrayed, ſhall we avoid all future riſk, by treating every pretender to patriotiſm and public ſpirit, as a knave and an impoſtor ? This indeed is a concluſion to which the unprincipled and the vicious are ever propenſe. They judge of their fellows by themſelves, and from the depravity of their own hearts are willing to infer, that every honeſty has its price. But the very motive that inclines the depraved to ſuch a mode of reaſoning, muſt, upon the very ſame account, deter the man of virtue from adopting it. Virtue is originally ever ſimple and unſuſpecting.

Conſcious to its own rectitude, and the integrity of its profeſſions, it naturally expects the ſame ſpecies of conduct from others. By every diſappointment of this kind, it is mortified and humbled. Long, very long muſt it have been baffled, and countleſs muſt have been its mortifications, ere it can be induced to adopt a principle of general miſtruſt. And that ſuch a principle ſhould have ſo large a ſpread among perſons, whoſe honeſty, candour forbids us to ſuſpect, is ſurely, of all the paradoxes upon the face of the earth, incomparably the greateſt.—The man of virtue then will be willing, before he gives up all our political connexions without diſtinction, to go along with me to the review of the only one that yet remains to be examined, that of the late marquis of Rockingham.

Too much perhaps cannot be ſaid in their praiſe. They have nearly engroſſed the confidence of every friend of liberty. They are the only men, whoſe principles were never darkened with the cloud of ſuſpicion.

picion. What, let me aſk, has been their uniform conduct during the whole courſe of the reign? They have been ever ſteady in their oppoſition, to whatever bore an ill aſpect to the cauſe of freedom, and to the whole train of thoſe political meaſures, that have terminated in calamity and ruin. They have been twice in adminiſtration. Proſperity and power are uſually circumſtances that prove the ſevereſt virtue. While in power how then did this party conduct themſelves?

Of their firſt adminiſtration the principal meaſure was the ſtamp act. A law that reſtored tranquility to a diſtracted empire. A law, to which, if ſucceeding adminiſtrations had univerſally adhered, we had been at this moment, the excluſive allies and patrons of the whole continent of North America. A law, that they carried in oppoſition to the all-dreaded Mr. Pitt, on the one hand, and on the other, againſt the inclination of thoſe ſecret directors, from whoſe hands they receive their delegated power. They repealed the exciſe upon cyder. They aboliſhed

general warrants. And after having been the authors of theſe and a thouſand other benefits in the midſt of ſtorms and danger; they quitted their places with a diſintereſtedneſs, that no other ſet of men have imitated. They ſecured neither place, penſion, nor reverſion to themſelves, or any of their adherents.

Their ſecond adminiſtration was indeed very ſhort. But it was crowded with the moſt ſalutary meaſures. The granting a full relief to Ireland. The paſſing ſeveral moſt important bills of oeconomy and reformation. The paſſing the contractors bill. The carrying into effect that moſt valuable meaſure, the aboliſhing the vote of cuſtom-houſe officers in the election of members of parliament. And laſtly, the attempt to atchieve, that moſt important of all objects, the eſtabliſhment of an equal repreſentation. What might not have been expected from their longer continuance in office?

But I will not confine myſelf to the conſideration of their conduct as a body. The characters of the individuals of which they are compoſed, will ſtill further illuſtrate their true principles, and furniſh a ſtrong additional recommendation of them, to every friend of virtue and of liberty. That I may not overcharge this part of my ſubject, I will only mention two or three of their moſt diſtinguiſhed leaders.

The character of the preſent chancellor of the exchequer is entirely an *unique*. Though mixing in all the buſy ſcenes of life, though occupying for many years a principal place in the political affairs of this country, he has *kept himſelf unſpotted from the world*.—The word of the elder Cato was eſteemed ſo ſacred with the Romans, that it became a proverb among them reſpecting things, ſo improbable, that their truth could not be eſtabliſhed even by the higheſt authority, "I would "not believe it, though it were told me "by Cato." And in an age much more diſſipated,

diſſipated than that of Cato, the integrity and honour of the noble lord I have mentioned, has become equally proverbial. Not bonds, nor deeds, nor all the ſhackles of law, are half ſo much to be depended upon as is his lighteſt word. He is deaf to all the prejudices of blood or private friendſhip, and has no feelings but for his country.

Of the duke of Portland, I can ſay the leſs, as not having had an opportunity of knowing much reſpecting him. His candour and his honour have never been queſtioned. And I remember, in the debate upon the celebrated ſeceſſion of the Rockingham party, upon the death of their leader, to have heard his abilities particularly vouched in very ſtrong terms, by Mr. chancellor Pitt, and the preſent lord Sidney. The latter in particular, though one of my lord Shelburne's ſecretaries of ſtate, fairly avowed in ſo many words, that he ſhould have been better ſatisfied with the appointment of his grace, to the office he now holds,

than

than he was, with the noble lord, under whom he acted.

The character of lord Keppel, with perſons not attached to any party, has uſually been that of a man of much honeſty and ſimplicity, without any remarkable abilities. It is a little extraordinary however, that, though forced by a combination of unfavourable circumſtances into a public ſpeaker, he is yet, even in that line, very far from contempt. His ſpeeches are manly, regular, and to the purpoſe. His defence upon his trial at Portſmouth, in which he muſt naturally be ſuppoſed to have had at leaſt a principal ſhare, has, in my opinion, much beauty of compoſition. The adverſaries of this party, though unwilling to admit that the navy was ſo much improved under his auſpices as was aſſerted, have yet, I believe, univerſally acknowledged his particular activity and diligence.

But I come to the great boaſt of his own party, and the principal object of attack to their enemies, the celebrated Mr. Fox. Men of formality and ſanctity have complained of him as diſſipated. They do not pretend however to aggravate their accuſation, by laying to his charge any of the greater vices. His contempt of money, and his unbounded generoſity, are univerſally confeſſed. Let ſuch then know, that diſſipation, ſo qualified, is a very ſlight accuſation againſt a public man, if indeed it deſerves a ſerious conſideration. In all expanſive minds, in minds formed for an extenſive ſtage, to embrace the welfare and the intereſt of nations, there is a certain inceſſant activity, a principle that muſt be employed. Debar them from their proper field, and it will moſt inevitably run out into exceſſes, which perhaps had better have been avoided. But do theſe excreſcences, which only proceed from the richneſs and fertility of the ſoil, diſqualify a man for public buſineſs? Far, very far from it. Where ever was there

a man

a man, who puſhed diſſipation and debauchery to a greater length, than my lord Bolingbroke? And yet it is perhaps difficult to ſay, whether there ever exiſted a more induſtrious, or an abler miniſter. The peace of Utrecht, concluded amidſt a thouſand difficulties, from our allies abroad, and our parties, that were never ſo much exaſperated againſt each other at home; muſt ever remain the monument of his glory. His oppoſition to ſir Robert Walpole ſeems evidently to have been founded upon the moſt generous principles. And though the warmth and ebullition of his paſſions evermore broke in upon his happieſt attempts, yet were his exertions in both inſtances attended with the moſt ſalutary conſequences. But Mr. Fox appears to me to poſſeſs all the excellencies, without any any of the defects of lord Bolingbroke. His paſſions have, I believe, never been ſuſpected of having embroiled the affairs of his party, and he has uniformly retained the confidence of them all. His friendſhips have been ſolid and

unſhaken. His conduct cool and intrepid. The littleneſs of jealouſy never diſcoloured a conception of his heart. In office he was more conſtant and indefatigable, than lord Bolingbroke himſelf. All his leſſer purſuits ſeemed annihilated, and he was ſwallowed up in the direction of public affairs.

He has been accuſed of ambition. Ambition is a very ambiguous term. In its loweſt ſenſe, it ſinks the meaneſt, and degrades the dirtieſt of our race. In its higheſt, I cannot agree with thoſe who ſtile it the defect of noble minds. I eſteem it worthy of the loudeſt commendation, and the moſt aſſiduous culture. Mr. Fox's is certainly not an ambition of emolument. Nobody dreams it. It is not an ambition, that can be gratified by the diſtribution of places and penſions. This is a paſſion, that can only dwell in the weakeſt and moſt imbecil minds. Its neceſſary concomitants, are official inattention and oſcitancy. No. The ambition of this hero is a generous

nerous thirſt of fame, and a deſire of poſſeſſing the opportunity of conferring the moſt laſting benefits upon his country. It is an inſtinct, that carries a man forward into the field of fitneſs, and of God.

The vulgar, incapable of comprehending theſe exalted paſſions, are apt upon the ſlighteſt occaſions to ſuſpect, that this heroical language is only held out to them for a lure, and that the moſt illuſtrious characters among us are really governed by paſſions, equally incident to the meaneſt of mankind. Let ſuch examine the features and the manners of Mr. Fox. Was that man made for a Jeſuit? Is he capable of the dirty, laborious, inſidious tricks of a hypocrite? Is there not a certain manlineſs about him, that diſdains to miſlead? Are not candour and ſincerity, bluntneſs of manner, and an unſtudied air, conſpicuous in all he does?— I know not how far the argument may go with others, with me, I confeſs, it has much weight. I believe

a man of ſterling genius, incapable of the littleneſſes and meanneſſes, incident to the vulgar courtier. What are the principal characteriſtics of genius? Are they not large views, infinite conceptions, a certain manlineſs and intrepidity of thinking? But all real and ſerious vice originates in ſelfiſh views, narrow conceptions, and intellectual cowardice. A man of genius may poſſibly be thoughtleſs, diſſipated and unſtudied; but he cannot avoid being conſtant, generous, and ſincere. The union of firſt rate abilities with malignity, avarice, and envy, ſeems to me very nearly as incredible a phenomenon, as a mermaid, a unicorn, or a phœnix.

I cannot overcome the propenſity I feel to add Mr. Burke to this illuſtrious catalogue, though the name of this gentleman leads me out of the circle of the cabinet. Mr. Burke raiſed himſelf from an obſcure ſituation, by the greatneſs of his abilities, and his unrivalled genius. Never was diſtinction more nobly earned.

Of

Of every ſpecies of literary compoſition he is equally a maſter. He excels alike in the moſt abſtruſe metaphyſical diſquiſition, and in the warmeſt and moſt ſpirited painting. His rhetoric is at once ornamented and ſublime. His ſatire is poliſhed and ſevere. His wit is truly Attic. Luxuriant in the extreme, his alluſions are always ſtriking, and always happy. But to enumerate his talents, is to tell but half his praiſe. The application he has made of them is infinitely more to his honour. He has devoted himſelf for his country. The drieſt and moſt laborious inveſtigations have not deterred him. Among a thouſand other articles, that might be mentioned, his ſyſtem of œconomical reform muſt for ever ſtand forth, alike the monument of his abilities, and his patriotiſm. His perſonal character is of the moſt amiable kind. Humanity and benevolence are ſtrongly painted in his countenance. His tranſactions with lord Rockingham were in the higheſt degree honourable to him. And the more they are inveſtigated, and the better they are

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underſtood, the more diſintereſtedneſs of virtue, and generous ſingularity of thinking, will be found to have been exhibited on both ſides.

It is neceſſary perhaps, that I ſhould ſay a word reſpecting the ariſtocratical principles of this gentleman, by which he is diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of his party. To theſe principles I profeſs myſelf an enemy. I am ſorry they ſhould be entertained by a perſon, for whom, in every other reſpect, I feel the higheſt veneration. But the views of that man muſt be truly narrow, who will give up the character of another, the moment he differs from him in any of his principles. I am ſure Mr. Burke is perfectly ſincere in his perſuaſion. And I hope I have long ſince learned not to queſtion the integrity of any man, upon account of his tenets, whether in religion or politics, be they what they may. I rejoice however, that this gentleman has connected himſelf with a ſet of men, by the rectitude of whoſe views, I truſt, the ill tendency of any ſuch in-

involuntary error will be effectually counteracted. In the mean time this deviation of Mr. Burke from the general principles of his connexion, has given occaſion to ſome to impute ariſtocratical views to the whole party The beſt anſwer to this, is, that the parliamenty reform was expreſly ſtipulated by lord Rockingham, in his coalition with the earl of Shelburne, as one of the principles, upon which the Adminiſtration of March, 1782, was formed.

From what has been ſaid, I conſider my firſt propoſition as completely eſtabliſhed, that the Rockingham party was the only connexion of men, by which the country could be well ſerved.

I would however juſt obſerve one thing by the way. I forſee that my firſt propoſition lies open to a ſuperficial and childiſh kind of ridicule. But in order to its operation, it is not neceſſary to ſay, that the friends of lord Rockingham were perſuaded, that the country could

not

not be well ſerved, but by themſelves. In reality, this is the proper and philoſophical ſtate of it: that each individual of that connexion was perſuaded, that the country could not be well ſerved but by his friends. And I truſt, it has now appeared, that this was a juſt and rational perſuaſion.

The next argument adduced in conformation of my theſis, is, that they were not by themſelves of ſufficient ſtrength, to ſupport the weight of adminiſtration. It is certainly a melancholy conſideration, that there ſhould not be virtue enough left in a people to ſupport an adminiſtration of honeſt views and uniform principles, againſt all the cabals of faction. This however, is incontrovertibly the caſe with Britain. The bulk of her inhabitants are become, in a very high degree, inattentive, and indifferent to the conduct of her political affairs. This has been, at one time, aſcribed to their deſpair of the commonwealth, and their mortification in

per-

perceiving a certain courſe of mal-adminiſtration perſiſted in, in defiance of the known ſenſe of the country. At another time, it has been imputed to their experience of the hollowneſs of all our public pretenders to patriotiſm. I am afraid, the cauſe is to be ſought in ſomething, more uniform in it's operation, and leſs honourable to the lower ranks of ſociety, than either of theſe. In a word, luxury and diſſipation have every where looſened the bands of political union. The intereſt of the public has been forgotten by all men; and we have been taught to laugh at the principles, by which the patriots of former ages were induced, to ſacrifice their fortunes and their lives for the welfare of their citizens. Provided the cup of enjoyment be not daſhed from our own lips, and the pillow of ſloth torn away from our own heads, we do not aſk, what ſhall be the fate of our liberties, our poſterity, and our country. Diſintereſted affection ſeems to have taken up her laſt refuge in a few choice ſpirits, and elevated minds, who appear among

us, like the inhabitants of another world. In the mean time, while the lower people have been *careful for none of these things*, they have been almoſt conſtantly decided in the ſenate, not by a view to their intrinſic merits, but in conformity to the jarring intereſts, and the inexplicable cabals of faction. In ſuch a ſituation, alas! what can unprotected virtue do? Deſtitute of all that comelineſs that allures; ſtripped of that influence that gives weight and conſideration; and unſkilled in the acts of intrigue?

In conformity to theſe ideas, when the choice of an adminiſtration was once again thrown back upon the people, in March, 1782, we perceive, that no one party found themſelves ſufficiently ſtrong for the ſupport of government; and a coalition became neceſſary between the Rockingham connexion, and a perſon they never cordially approved, the earl of Shelburne. Even thus ſupported, and called to the helm, with perhaps as much popularity, as any adminiſtration ever enjoyed,

joyed, they did not carry their meaſure in parliament without difficulty. The inconſiderate and intereſted did even think proper to ridicule their imbecility; particularly in the houſe of lords. The moſt unſuſpected of all our patriots, Mr. Burke, was reduced to the neceſſity of ſo far contracting his ſyſtem of reform upon this account, as to have afforded a handle to ſuperficial raillery and abuſe.

But turn we to the adminiſtration that ſucceeded them; who ſtill retained ſome pretenſions to public ſpirit; and among whom there remained ſeveral individuals, whoſe claim to political integrity was indiſputably. Weaker than the miniſtry of lord Rockingham, to what ſhifts were they not reduced to preſerve their precarious power? Theſe are the men, who have been loudeſt in their cenſures of the late coalition. And yet did not they form coalitions, equally extraordinary with that which is now under conſideration? To omit the noble lord who preſided at the treaſury board, and to confine myſelf to

thoſe inſtances, which Mr. Fox had occaſion to mention in treating my ſubject. Was there not the late chancellor of the exchequer, who has been ſevereſt in his cenſures of lord North, and the lord advocate of Scotland, who was his principal ſupporter, and was for puſhing the American meaſures, even to greater lengths, than the noble patron himſelf? Was there not the maſter general of the ordnance, who has ever gone fartheſt in his view of political reform, and declaimed moſt warmly againſt ſecret influence; and the lord chancellor, the moſt determined enemy of reform, and who has been ſuppoſed the principal vehicle of that influence? Laſtly, was there not, in the ſame manner, the ſecretary of ſtate for the home department, who was moſt unwearied in his invectives againſt lord Bute; and the right honourable Mr. Jenkinſon, who has been conſidered by the believers in the inviſible power of that nobleman, as the chief inſtrument of his deſigns.

With

With theſe examples of the neceſſity of powerful ſupport and extenſive combination, what mode of conduct was it, that it was moſt natural, moſt virtuous, and moſt wiſe, for the Rockingham connexion to adopt? I confeſs, I can perceive none more obvious, or more juſt, than that which they actually adopted, a junction with the noble commoner in the blue ribbon. At leaſt, from what has been ſaid, I truſt, thus much is evident beyond control, that they had juſt reaſon to conſider themſelves abſtractedly, as too weak for the ſupport of government.

Still further to ſtrengthen my argument, I affirm, in the third place, that they were not the men, whoſe ſervices were likely to be called for by the Sovereign. I believe, that this propoſition will not be thought to ſtand in need of any very abſtruſe train of reaſoning to ſupport it. The late events reſpecting it have been, inſtead of a thouſand arguments. From an apprehenſion, probably, of the uncourtierlineſs of their temper,

and

and their inflexible attachment to a ſyſtem; it ſeems to appear by thoſe events, that the ſovereign had contracted a ſort of backwardneſs to admit them into his councils, which it is to be hoped, was only temporary. It was however ſuch, as, without any other apparent cauſe to cooperate with it, alone ſufficed to delay the forming an adminiſtration for ſix weeks, in a moſt delicate and critical juncture. Even the union of that noble perſon, who had been conſidered as his majeſty's favourite miniſter, did not appear to be enough to ſubdue the averſeneſs. However then we may hope, that untainted virtue and ſuperior abilities, when more intimately known, may be found calculated to ſurmount prejudices and conciliate affection; it ſeems but too evident, that in the critical moment, thoſe men, by whom alone we have endeavoured to prove, that the country could be well ſerved, would not voluntarily have been thought on.

But

But it does not ſeem to have been enough conſidered, at what time the coalition was made. The Rockingham connexion, along with thouſands of their fellow citizens, who were unconnected with any party, were induced, from the pureſt views, to diſapprove of the late treaty of peace. The voting with the friends of lord North upon that queſtion, was a matter purely incidental. By that vote however, in which a majority of the commons houſe of parliament was included, the adminiſtration of lord Shelburne was diſſolved. It was not till after the diſſolution was really effected, that the coalition took place. In this ſituation ſomething was neceſſary to be done. The nation was actually without a miniſtry. It was a criſis that did not admit of heſitation and delay. The country muſt, if a ſyſtem of delay had been adopted, have immediately been thrown back into the hands of thoſe men, from whom it had been ſo laborioufly forced ſcarce twelve months before; or it muſt have been committed to the conduct of perſons

ſons even leſs propitious to the cauſe of liberty, and the privileges of the people. A ſituation, like this, called for a firm and manly conduct. It was no longer a time to ſtoop to the yoke of prejudice. It was a time, to burſt forth into untrodden paths; to loſe ſight of the heſitating and timid; and generouſly to adventure upon a ſtep, that ſhould rather have in view ſubſtantial ſervice, than momentary applauſe; and ſhould appeal from the ſhort-ſighted deciſion of ſyſtematic prudence, to the tribunal of facts, and the judgment of poſterity.

But why did I talk of the tribunal of facts? Events are not within the diſpoſi- of human power. "'Tis not in mortals "to command ſucceſs." And the characters of wiſdom and virtue, are therefore very properly conſidered by all men, who pretend to ſober reflection, as independent of it. If then, as I firmly believe, the coalition was founded in the wiſeſt and moſt generous views, the man, that values himſelf upon his rational nature, will

will not wait for the event. He will immediately and peremptorily decide in its favour. Though it ſhould be annihilated to-morrow; though it had been originally fruſtrated in its views, reſpecting the continuation of a miniſtry; he would not heſitate to pronounce, that it was formed in the moſt expanſive and long-ſighted policy, in the nobleſt and moſt prudent daring, in the warmeſt generoſity, and the trueſt patriotiſm.

But it will be ſaid, a coalition of parties may indeed be allowed to be in many caſes proper and wiſe; but a coalition between parties who have long treated each other with the extremeſt rancour, appears a ſpecies of conduct, abhorrent to the unadulterated judgment, and all the native prepoſſeſſions of mankind. It plucks away the very root of unſuſpecting confidence, and can be productive of nothing, but anarchy and confuſion.

In anſwer to this argument, I will not cite the happy effects of the coalition be-

tween parties juſt as oppoſite, by which Mr. Pitt was introduced into office in the cloſe of a former reign. Still leſs will I cite the coalition of the earl of Shelburne, with ſeveral leaders of the Bedford connexion, and others, whoſe principles were at leaſt as inimical to the popular cauſe, and the parliamentary reform, as thoſe of Lord North; and the known readineſs of him and his friends to have formed a junction with the whole of that connexion. I need not even hint at the probability there exiſts, that the noble lord then in adminiſtration, would have been happy to have formed the very coalition himſelf, which he is willing we ſhould ſo much reprobate in another. I need not mention the ſuſpicions, that naturally ſuggeſted themſelves upon the invincible ſilence of his party, reſpecting the maladminiſtration of lord North, for ſo long a time; and their bringing forward the ſingular charge of fifty unaccounted millions at the very moment that the coalition was completed. I ſhould be ſorry to have it ſuppoſed, that the connexion

I am

I am defending, ever took an example from the late premier, for one article of their conduct. And I think the mode of vindicating them, not from temporary examples, but from eternal reaſon, as it is in itſelf moſt ſtriking and moſt honourable, ſo is it not a whit leſs eaſy and obvious.

Let it be remembered then, in the firſt place, that there was no other connexion, ſufficiently unqueſtionable in their ſincerity, and of ſufficient weight in the ſenate, with which to form a coalition. The Bedford party, had they even been willing to have taken this ſtep in conjunction with the friends of lord Rockingham, were already ſtripped of ſome of their principal and ableſt members, by the arts of lord Shelburne. Whether theſe ought to be conſidered in ſound reaſon, as more or leſs obnoxious than lord North, I will not take upon me to determine. Certain I am, that the Scottiſh connexion were, of all others, the moſt ſuſpicious in themſelves, and the moſt odious to

the people. The only choice then that remained, was that which was made. The only ſubject for deliberation, was, whether this choice were more or leſs laudable than, on the other hand, the deſerting entirely the intereſts of their country, and leaving the veſſel of the ſtate to the mercy of the winds.

Secondly, I would obſerve that the principal ground of diſpute between lord North and his preſent colleagues in adminiſtration, was done away by the termination of the American war. An impeachment of the noble lord for his paſt errors was perfectly out of the queſtion. No one was mad enough to expect it. A vein of public ſpirit, diffuſing itſelf among all ranks of ſociety, is the indiſpenſible concomitant of impeachments and attainder. And ſuch a temper, I apprehend, will not be ſuſpected to be characteriſtic of the age in which we live. But were it otherwiſe, the Rockingham connexion certainly never ſtood in the way of an impeachment, had it been meditated.

tated. And, excluſive of this queſtion, I know of no objection, that applies particular to the noble lord, in contradiſtinction to any of the other parties into which we are divided.

But, in the third place, the terms upon which the coalition was made, form a moſt important article of conſideration in eſtimating its merits. They are generally underſtood to have been theſe two; that the Rockingham connexion ſhould at all times have a majority in the cabinet; and that lord North ſhould be be removed to that "hoſpital of incurables," as lord Cheſterfield has ſtiled it, the houſe of lords. Surely theſe articles are the happieſt that could have been conceived for preſerving the power of adminiſtration, as much as may be, with the friends of the people. Places, merely of emolument and magnificence, muſt be beſtowed ſomewhere. Where then can they be more properly lodged, than in the hands of thoſe who are beſt able to ſupport a liberal and virtuous adminiſtration?

I beg

I beg leave to add once more, in the fourth place, that, whatever the demerits of lord North as a miniſter may be ſuppoſed to have been, he is perhaps, in a thouſand other reſpects, the fitteſt man in the world to occupy the ſecond place in a junction of this ſort. The union of the Rockingham connexion with the earl of Shelburne laſt year, was, I will admit, leſs calculated to excite popular aſtoniſhment, and popular diſapprobation, than the preſent. In the eye of cool reaſon and ſober foreſight, I am apt to believe, it was much leſs wiſe and commendable. Lord Shelburne, though he has been able to win over the good opinion of ſeveral, under the notion of his being a friend of liberty, is really, in many reſpects, ſtiffly ariſtocratical, or highly monarchical. Lord Shelburne is a man of inſatiable ambition, and who purſues the ends of that ambition by ways the moſt complex and inſidious. The creed of lord North, whatever it may be, upon general political queſtions, is conſiſtent and intelligible. For my own part, I do not believe him to be ambitious.

It

It is not poſſible, with his indolent and eaſy temper, that he ſhould be very ſuſceptible to ſo reſtleſs a paſſion. In the heroical ſenſe of that word, he ſits looſe to fame. He is undoubtedly deſirous, by all the methods that appear to him honourable and juſt, to enrich and elevate his family. He wiſhes to have it in his power to oblige and to ſerve his friends. But I am exceedingly miſtaken, if he entered into the preſent alliance from views of authority and power. Upon the conditions I have mentioned, it was a ſcheme, congenial only to a man of a dark and plotting temper. But the temper of lord North is in the higheſt degree candid, open and undiſguiſed. Eaſy at home upon every occaſion, there is not a circle in the world to which his preſence would not be an addition. It is calculated to inſpire unconſtraint and confidence into every breaſt. Simple and amiable is the juſt deſcription of his character in every domeſtic relation; conſtant and unreſerved in his connexions of friendſhip. The very verſatility and pliableneſs, ſo loudly condemned

demned in his former ſituation, is now an additional recommendation. Is this the man, for whoſe intrigues and conſpiracies we are bid to tremble?

Another charge that has been urged againſt the coalition, is, that it was a ſtep that dictated to the ſovereign, and excluded all, but one particular ſet of men, from the national councils. The firſt part of this charge is ſomewhat delicate in its nature. I ſhall only ſay reſpecting it, that, if, as we have endeavoured to prove, there were but one connexion, by which the buſineſs of adminiſtration could be happily diſcharged, the friend of liberty, rejoicing in the auſpicious event, will not be very inquiſitive in reſpect to the etiquette, with which they were introduced into the government. In the mean time, far from intending an excluſion, they declared publicly, that they would be happy to receive into their body any man of known integrity and abilities, from whatever party he came. The declaration has never been contradicted.—

Strangers

Strangers to the remoteſt idea of proſcription, they erected a fortreſs, where every virtue, and every excellence might find a place.

The only remaining objection to the coalition that I know of, that it ſhocks eſtabliſhed opinions, is not, I think, in itſelf, calculated to have much weight, and has, perhaps, been ſufficiently animadverted upon, as we went along, in what has been already ſaid. The proper queſtion is, was it a neceſſary ſtep? Was there any other way, by which the country could be redeemed? If a ſatisfactory anſwer has been furniſhed to theſe enquiries, the inevitable concluſion in my opinion is, that the more it ſhocked eſtabliſhed opinions, and the more intellectual nerve it demanded, the more merit did it poſſeſs, and the louder applauſe is its due.

I am not inclined to believe, that a majority of my countrymen, upon reflection, have diſapproved this meaſure. I am

happy to perceive, that ſo much of that good ſenſe and manly thinking in public queſtions, that has for ages been conſidered as the characteriſtic quality of Engliſhmen, is ſtill left among us. There can be nothing more honourable than this.—By it our commonalty, though unable indeed to foreſtal the hero and the man of genius in his ſchemes, do yet, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, tread upon his heels, and are prepared to follow him in all his views, and to glow with all his ſentiments.

Senſible however, that in the firſt bluſh of ſuch a ſcheme, its enemies muſt neceſſarily find their advantage in entrenching themſelves behind thoſe prejudices, that could not be eradicated in a moment, I was willing to wait for the hour of calmneſs and deliberation. I reſolved cooly to let the firſt guſt of prepoſſeſſion blow over, and the ſpring tide of cenſure exhauſt itſelf. I believed, that ſuch a cauſe demanded only a fair and candid hearing.

hearing. I have endeavoured to diſcharge my part in obtaining for it ſuch a hearing. And I muſt leave the reſt to my readers.

Among theſe there probably will be ſome, who, ſtruck with the force of the arguments I have adduced on the one hand, and entangled in their favourite prejudices on the other, will remain in a kind of ſuſpence; aſhamed to retract their former opinions, but too honeſt to deny all weight and conſideration to thoſe I have defended. To theſe I have one word to ſay, and with that one word I will conclude. I will ſuppoſe you to confeſs, that appearances, excluſive of the controverted ſtep, are in a thouſand inſtances favourable to the new miniſters. They have made the ſtrongeſt profeſſions, and the largeſt promiſes of attachment to the general cauſe. To profeſſions and promiſes I do not wiſh you to truſt. I ſhould bluſh to revive the odious and exploded maxim, not men, but meaſures. If you cannot place

ſome confidence in the preſent adminiſtration, I adviſe you, as honeſt men, to do every thing in your power to drive them from the helm. But you will hardly deny, that all their former conduct has afforded reaſons for confidence. You are ready to admit, that, in no inſtance, but one, have they committed their characters. In that one inſtance, they have much to ſay for themſelves, and it appears, at leaſt, very poſſible, that they may have been acted in it, by virtuous and generous principles, even though we ſhould ſuppoſe them miſtaken. Remember then, that popularity and fame are the very nutriment of virtue. A thirſt for fame is not a weakneſs. It is "the noble mind's diſtinguiſhing perfection." If then you would bind adminiſtration by tenfold ties to the cauſe of liberty, do not withdraw from them your approbation till they have forfeited it, by betraying, in one plain and palpable inſtance, the principles upon which they have formerly acted. I believe they need no new bonds, but are unchangeably

changeably fixed in the generous ſyſtem, with which they commenced. But thus much is certain. If any thing can detach them from this glorious cauſe; if any thing can cool their ardour for the common weal, there is nothing that has half ſo great a tendency to effect this, as unmerited obloquy and diſgrace.

FINIS.

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